WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF ART

Portrait bust of King Albert of Belgium, by Miss Mary Winfield Mason.

In the Goupil Gallery.

LARGE mural decorations for a public building ought to engage the best talents for this particular form of art that the community possesses. There is no other work, unless it be municipal architecture and sculpture, about which we should be more serious, for it is peculiarly the public property. There is slight excuse for experiment and no excuse whatever for favoritism in the awarding of commissions for the public art.

It is a horrid thought that sensitive people must be tortured and the weak misled for generations by mural art concocted by artists who had more friends in power to secure the job for them than they had ability to execute it, for mural decorations once placed are difficult to remove. In the era in which we have now embarked, with our buildings more and more immune from destruction by fire, we can look for no help from on high. We must help ourselves, if we are to be helped at all. If we are to pass as an intelligent nation in the arts we shall have to begin by using our intelligence. For a long time, apparently, most of us have refused to think, we have only shuddered.

To the American jealous for his country's good name the continually recurring miracle of the beautiful building beautifully placed, that is the rule and not the accident in Paris, is the mystery of the modern world. There is also the accompaniment of noble sculptures tastefully installed, and the even more remarkable mystery of Puvis's decorations in the sacred places.

If Paris, why not New York? The very question makes my gentle reader smile, I see. Yet Paris is a modern city. It is not at all beautiful because of quaint heritages from ancient times. Paris must always have been gay and alluring, but it is only necessary to read the memoirs of Stendhal to discover the enormous differences between the Paris of 1815 and the Paris of 1915 and to see that Paris still guards her beauty secret.

I have asked Macmonnies and I have asked Bartlett, both sculptors who have lived long in France, why it is that the French Government's purchases at the annual Salons are almost invariably the most interesting pieces of sculpture in these exhibitions. Human nature is much the same all over the world, and political machinery is understood in Europe as well as here, so that this better luck in public art that falls to France has intrigued me enormously ever since the early age at which I first grew tired of the bronze of Horace Greeley at Thirty-third street and Broadway.

Both Bartlett and Macmonnies gave me the same reply; almost word for word: "It's because the people on the committees know good art; you cannot fool them." This reply is undoubtedly interesting, and the implication of strict honesty upon the part of the committees should not be missed by the gentle reader, who has quit smiling by now, I trust. But with all due homage to the eminent sculptors quoted, I do not find their explanations entirely satisfactory.

Rather I am inclined to trace the clue to some inherent quality in the French people themselves. Not only the French committees but the French general public know good art when they see it. Furthermore, the French general public has no more fear of discussing a work of art than it has of any other topic. It loves to express its opinions, which it does with great particularity and vehemence.

If an artist makes a hit over there it's a palpable hit; and if he doesn't make a hit he also knows it. French committeemen have their partialities and tendencies toward sin just as ours have, but fortunately for them, they have a stern corrective. Woe betide the luckless committee that should foist some outrageous monument upon the public just because the author was a friend of theirs or a "good fellow"!

This faculty for frankness is to me the secret weapon of the French. Oh, for a little of it here!

This is the last afternoon in which Kenyon Cox's decoration for the Senate chamber of the State Capitol at Madison, Wis., may be seen in the Vanderbilt gallery at 215 West Fifty-seventh street. It is entitled "The Marriage of the Atlantic and the Pacific"; it is in three panels, and is a characteristic work by this painter.

New Yorkers will relinquish these decorations without any great strain upon their philosophies, but those of us who have relatives in this far Western city feel somewhat disturbed.

Two figures representing the oceans (the Atlantic, being the older, is the gentleman) are being married by a third figure, in the central panel. The European nations coming to the ceremony occupy one side panel and the Oriental nations balance them in the third canvas. It would be easy to be facetious in describing these figures, for not a gleam of humor has restrained the artist in carrying out his motif.

In a picture painted for all time of course one is justified in ignoring the temporary differences of opinion that so inflame the Europe of the present, but even in an interval of peace there is something ludicrous in the way in which Mr. Cox has grouped his arriving nations in little boats. In any epoch so constrained an embarcation would produce sea changes of dire consequence.

To be quite frank, and this is an occasion upon which French candor is called for, the composition is excessively amateurish and feeble. It is the sort of arrangement that art students who afterward give up art make, hard, awkward and without illusion. The expressions of the faces mean nothing, the figures themselves are monotonously out of proportion and the color, to put it mildly, is very unpleasant.

Mr. Cox has long been a conspicuous figure in our art life and in one or two ways has served this public well, but upon the whole his career has been unfortunate both for himself and us. He writes well. He has recently published his study of Winslow Homer, which is a credit to all of us, expressing beautifully all that we have ever felt of Homer. There is no living American who could have written it better. He is a trifle more technical than the late John La Farge would have been upon the same subject, but his volume is likely to stand as an authority upon the most native artist this land has yet produced.

As a critic Mr. Cox is sound only upon work that is already a part of our traditions. Facing new forms of expression Mr. Cox is always hopelessly adrift and in consequence he did more damage to the generation he dominated than any individual in it. His influence upon students was not less fatal than his relentless attitude toward new talent in the public exhibitions, for which he seemed to be a perpetual juryman.

As a painter his successes have been few. In the early days there was the portrait of Miss Morgan, the harpist, that was not bad and there were occasional portraits of fellow artists that had merit. I have always felt that had Mr. Cox confined himself to portrait making and to illustrations in black and white he might have achieved a real reputation instead of this crumbling and shadowy one which a species of terrorism has imposed upon us. Color was impossible to him and design was not easy; but one can do portraits even without color.

I should be really grieved if this article should be misconstrued as an "attack" upon Mr. Cox. It is nothing of the sort. I have a sneaking respect for him which I cannot overcome, for I am a lover of traditions, and he has been with us so long and has always been such an Old Roman!

Besides, though unfortunate, he is incontestably honest. I consider that he should not have allowed himself to have been persuaded into the making of the long series of joyless mural paintings, but after all the real blame for this lies upon us, upon you who were smiling just now and upon me, because for years we have been permitting all the Western Senates in the land to acquire them without protest.

The Scott & Fowles Gallery contains a group of recent American portraits by Harrington Mann, most of which are of children. Mr. Mann's style as a painter is suave and presents no difficulties to the general public. The artist not only grasps the character but gets the likeness, qualities that do not invariably go together. His brush work is crisp and his color pleasant. The manner, in fact, is the manner that is most generally approved in America and that has constantly been in vogue here since its innovation by Sargent. In justice to Mr. Mann, however, it should be stated that much of Sargent's brusquerie has been avoided.

The most difficult problem our artist has had to face has been the painting of the children of T. C. Dennehy of Chicago, who are seven. Seven children to arrange in a portrait group is a formidable undertaking, and I have never heard of even Sargent's tackling such a robust theme.

Mr. Mann, to be sure, gets out of the difficulty by separating the good little Dennehy children from the bad little Dennehys, putting them into similar panels that doubtless will hang side by side in the Chicago home. I mean "good" and "bad," of course, from a painter's point of view as sitters. Practically all the Dennehy children are wonderfully good and never give the slightest trouble to their parents, but the four restless ones were not so easy to paint as the remaining three.

Good or bad, however, they will all be very glad to have this series of portraits when they grow up, and, my! how old fashioned their present costumes will then appear. The young Dennehy ladies twenty years hence will doubtless be leaders of fashion, but at the rate things have been going lately one's mind refuses even to contemplate what Chicagoans will be wearing in 1935.

Of the portraits of adults those of Mrs. F. Skiddy von Stade and Mrs. Devereux Milburn, daughters of Charles Steele, are the most successful. There are also shown some studies, both of children and adults. Of these the most prominent is the head called "Kathleen." This portrays a clear cut type of young lady, who, to judge by her lips, certainly pronounces the ends of syllables with more distinctness than most young American ladies are wont to do.

The etchings of Alphonse Legros now on exhibition in the Knoedler Galleries contain a number of rare and important impressions that have come from the famous collection of M. T. G. Arthur of Glasgow, recently dispersed. There used to be, so Beraldi said in "Les Graveurs du XIX Siecle," six complete collections of Legros's etchings, by Seymour Haden, Jonides, Thibaudeau and Howard in London and by Burty and Malassis in Paris, but there was one other "most complete known" collection, that of Mr. Arthur of Glasgow.

Legros exhibitions are frequent, two or three occur regularly every winter in New York, but it is to be noticed that the displays continually increase in number and importance, showing the growth of the interest in this gloomy but undeniable master of etching.

This is as it should be. Legros's cast of mind was gloomy. "Gloomy" is the fashionable adjective that is always applied to him, but the gloominess was for himself, and the perfection of his art makes his gift of expression a joy to the student in the same manner as the perfections of the "City of Dreadful Night" and "Othello" are uplifting rather than depressing influences.

His themes are few. He occupies himself chiefly with death, and death in its most grim form. One of his best known plates is of the haggard tramp dying on a roadside bank in a rain. His alternative theme is woodmen chopping trees, done with such solemnity that one fancies the artist regarded the two ideas as one, the fellsman of the tree representing death also to the artist, perhaps.

The decorative quality of all the plates is masterly, and in particular no modern painter has been able to make a tree with such telling simplicity and decorative strength with the exception of Puvis de Chavannes. And no other modern etcher's manner has been at once so restricted and so free. In spite of the recurring themes the interest never flags.

The general public is therefore recommended to this exhibition. Collectors and local etchers will regard its study as a duty and a privilege.

ART NEWS AND COMMENT.

IN the catalogue of the Edmund Davis gift of British art to the Musee National du Luxembourg Leonce Benedite gives details which lend certain unique aspects to the formation of the collection.

Its inception dates long before the present rapprochement of the two countries, he says, and it was as long ago as 1912 that Mr. and Mrs. Davis ripened the plans which have now been realized. Early in an interview in March of that year Mr. Davis asked M. Benedite point blank, "How many English painters have you in the Luxembourg? Who are they?"

"I gave him with some satisfaction," writes M. Benedite, "the enumeration of our little series, knowing the price that each of these conquests had cost me, and all the perseverance and effort. I cited Watts and the magnificent 'L'Amour et la Vie,' generously given by the artist. I mentioned the beautiful drawings of Burne-Jones, the paintings of Brangwyn, Lavery, Lorimer . . .

"'Yes, yes,' interrupted Mr. Davis, 'and also?'

"Then I continued.

"'But he interrupted me again.

"'Very good,' said he, 'but that's not all. Have you an intention to constitute an English room in the Luxembourg?'

"'Assuredly.'

"'What dimensions will it have?'

"I improvised upon the spot a little calculation.

"'That represents about how many canvases?'

"'About fifty.'

"'Very well, I will give you this room if you will accept it.'

"We were not long in coming to an understanding and the month following I was in London, where Mr. Davis led me through studios, expositions, galleries to secure the grouping that we dreamed of, for Mr. and Mrs. Davis had a double end in view: to gain a proper showing for living English artists abroad and also to give an expression to France of profound sympathy."

Among the works thus chosen and now given to the Luxembourg are Aubrey Beardsley's "Siegfried," Burne-Jones's "King's Daughter," Charles Conder's "Promenade," W. Holman Hunt's "Lorenzo and Isabella" (drawing), Augustus John's portrait of Mac-Evoy, Sir John Millais's portrait of Mrs. Heugh, W. Nicholson's "Still Life," Sir William Q. Orchardson's "Portrait of Edmund Davis," William Orpen's "Cafe Royal in London," J. Pryde's "The Slum," Charles Rickett's "The Peste," William Rothenstein's "Portrait of Charles Conder," Charles Shannon's "Sleeping Nymph," Walter Sickert's "Dieppe," Henry Tonke's "Jewel Merchant" and George Frederick Watts's "Eve."

The "Cafe Royal," by Orpen, in this collection is an amusing picture of a rendezvous in London for the French, which is particularly frequented by artists. The two individuals in the foreground taking absinthe are James Pryde and Augustus John. In the background Nicholson may be seen entering, directing mincing steps toward Orpen himself, and the celebrated Dr. Gogarty of Dublin; while A. W. Rich is also at a table and George Moore is just leaving the cafe. One wonders why Mr. Moore left just then!

Edmund Davis was a captain of industry in the Orient, controlling coal mines in China and tramways in Singapore, but we learn from M. Benedite how he came by his perspicacity in matters of art. It seems that, born in Australia, he was brought to Paris for his education and after a time thought of becoming a painter and actually entered an atelier to study. But ill health compelled him to give up painting and seek another climate. He lived in South Africa until the year of his marriage with his cousin, Miss Mary Ha ford, herself an artist.

Once returned to London Mr. Davis quickly took an exceptional place in industrial and financial affairs and also knew how to collect genuine masterpieces. There were recently shown in London for a benefit his Sophia, by Rembrandt, his Henrietta Maria by Van Dyck, his Gainsboroughs, Reynolds and his Velasquez. Furthermore, Mr. and Mrs. Davis were of the "advance guard" in admiring modern works. They surrounded themselves with artists of originality, tact and taste. Among their friends were Beardsley, Conder, Ricketts, Shannon, Pryde, Philpot, Rothenstein and Jacques Blanche. The charming Conder, so tender, sensitive, so loving and sad, like a far away inheritor of Watteau, gave Mrs. Davis much happy advice and decorated several of the rooms in the house on Lansdowne Road.

The Daniel Gallery has for its opening exhibition a number of new canvases by young artists whose work is now more or less associated with the house. William Zorach shows a decorative landscape of increased richness, Gus Mager sends an individual "Spring" with slender fruit trees exploding into bloom and Man Ray a sober portrait of a lady in white, a full length.

John Marin and Alfred Maurer are represented and so is Preston Dickinson, whose drawing of the High Bridge is a distinguished production. Mr. Demuth might not relish being called a "futurist," but his two studies of Times Square are difficult to include under any other category. They are quite easily decipherable, however, once you know the titles.

The George Grey Barnard Cloisters, one of the artistic sights of the city, located at 189th street and Fort Washington avenue, are now open to the public. Hours for visitors, 10 A. M. to 5 P. M. weekdays and from 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays.

A very complete collection of the etched work of Ernest Roth is now on exhibition in Keppel and Company's gallery. The architectural subjects for the most part have been found in Italy and France and have been treated with individuality and charm. The plate of "Assissi" is made clever by the narrow stairway that winds upward in a subtle line into the town; a sort of line that Whistler would have approved of.

"Volterra" is nicely indicated, its roofs circling the hill on which it is built. Other good plates are of the Theatre of Marcellus, the Forum, Amiens and Chartres, both cathedrals being seen from the river, with interesting foregrounds.

The following lectures have been arranged to be given at the Metropolitan Museum:

For members of the museum. Six illustrated lectures on the Italian painters as decorators. Miss Edith R. Abbot, museum instructor. Class room. Fridays, 11 A. M., beginning January 7.

For children of members. Four illustrated lectures. The museum instructors. Lecture hall. The following Saturday mornings—January 8, 22, February 5, 19, 11 A. M.

For teachers and for others on request. Six illustrated lectures on Italian painting and sculpture of the Renaissance. Miss Edith R. Abbot, museum instructor. Class room, Wednesdays, 4 P. M., beginning October 13.

For teachers and for others on request. Five illustrated lectures on the painting of the northern schools. Miss Edith R. Abbot, museum instructor. Class room, Tuesdays, 4:15 P. M., beginning March 14.

For students in art schools of New York city. Five lectures. Cecilia Beaux, William M. Chase, Robert Henri, Bryson Burroughs and Philip Hale. Museum Galleries, Saturdays in January and February, 8 P. M. Tickets will be required and may be secured for single lectures or for the course before December 10 on application at the office of the art school attended.

For salespeople, buyers and designers. Four illustrated lectures. Lecture hall. Saturdays in February, 8 P. M.

For the blind. Two lectures illustrated with objects from the collections which may be handled. Class room. Saturdays, 8 P. M., April 15 and 29.

For the deaf. Two illustrated lectures. Miss Jane B. Walker. Class room. Thursdays, December 2 and February 3, at 4 P. M.

For students of history in the city high schools. Mrs. Agnes L. Vaughan, Gisela M. A. Richter, Stella Rubinstein, Christian Gauss and Frank J. Mather, Jr. Lecture hall. Wednesdays, 4 P. M., beginning December 1.

George Leland Hunter, author of "Tapestries, Their Origin, History and Renaissance," is organizing a tapestry loan exhibition to be held for two weeks at the Pennsylvania Museum, Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, beginning October 25. It will be similar to the exhibitions organized by him last year at the Brooklyn and Buffalo museums and at the Avery Library of Columbia University, and like them will be accompanied by lecture promenades which are such an attractive feature of Mr. Hunter's classes on tapestries, rugs and furniture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The extramural division of New York University announces that on Monday, October 18, at 2 in the afternoon, in the classroom of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mr. Weinberg organizes his series of lecture promenades for the direct study of the masterpieces, from Giotto and the early masters to Cezanne and the moderns. The modern style will be studied in part in the dealers' galleries. These courses are designed for the lay mind, as well as for the special student of art. Circulars and further information may be obtained from Prof. Lough, New York University, Washington Square East.

The opening lecture of the course on the Art of the Metropolitan Museum, offered by Dr. George Kreyn for the department of extension teaching, Columbia University, was held Friday, October 15, 2:30 P. M., and repeated Saturday, October 16, 10 A. M., in the classroom of the museum. This is the fourth year for these lectures, which are planned for all those desiring to learn how to judge and enjoy sculpture, painting and the decorative arts by a systematic study of the originals in the museum, including the Morgan and Altman collections. The first semester, beginning in October, will be devoted to "Sculpture and the Decorative Arts"; the second, beginning in February, to the "Paintings of the Metropolitan Museum." Among the subjects treated are all varieties of sculpture, including bronzes and terra cottas, ivories, enamels, ceramics, furniture and the decorative arts. The class meets at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in two sections, Friday, 2:30-4:10 P. M. and Saturday, 10-11:40 A. M.

Three of the seven children of T. C. Dennehy. One panel of the group portrait by Harrington Mann.

On exhibition at Scott & Fowles Gallery.

Adjutant birds. From the painting by Carton Moorepark.

In the Folsom Galleries.

Mrs. Devereux Milburn, formerly Miss Nancy G. Steele. From the portrait by Harrington Mann, painted before her marriage.

At Scott & Fowles Gallery.